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LOCAL NEWS

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## Plan raises Shasta Dam

### CALFED proposal addresses state's need for more water

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It might be easier to raise the Titanic.

Nevertheless, Gov. Gray Davis and U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt are expected to announce today a plan to raise the height of Shasta Dam by 6 feet to expand this state's largest reservoir to help solve California's water shortage and pollution problems.

Raising Shasta Dam is not a new idea. The issue has been around for almost two decades.

But it appears to be gaining momentum with today's expected endorsement by Davis and Babbitt.

Still, Shasta County Supervisor Molly Wilson, who represents the northern part of the county, and who has long been opposed to the raising of Shasta Dam, said Thursday she continues to think the idea's all wet.

"It's not going to do the job," she said.

Raising the dam by 6 feet at an estimated cost of \$122 million would provide about an additional 290,000 acre-feet of water, enough water to supply about 1.5 million people for a year, according to state and federal officials.

But, Wilson said, it makes a lot more sense to build a reservoir near Sites, west of Maxwell in Colusa County, that could store up to 3 million acre-feet of water. The development of a second reservoir in that same general area would, when added together with a Sites reservoir, allow the storage of 12 million acre-feet, she said.

"It would satisfy the water needs for all Southern California," she said. But, she admitted, the cost of the two reservoirs would be enormous. "It's (raising Shasta Dam) not going to be adequate. We have to develop those reservoirs."

One thing is clear, however. If Shasta Dam is raised, it won't be tomorrow.

It could take years.

The proposals included in the draft water plan, which has been five years in the making by a joint state-federal agency called CALFED, are expected to cost tens of billions of dollars over the next 30 years to help expand reservoirs and restore rivers.

water supplies to south San Joaquin Valley farmers will help sustain our impressive food and fiber industry, and help build a new economy for the valley," said Westlands Water District general manager David Orth. Westlands provides water for 565,000 acres of crops that are valued at \$1 billion.

Equally important to environmental groups is the assurance that an additional 380,000 acre-feet will be set aside annually for the needs of fish and wildlife. An acre-foot of water would cover a football field 1 foot deep.

"Those two issues have been in conflict for years, and it's reasonable to have both of them on the table," Condit said. "Reliability was a very important issue in these discussions, both for agriculture and the environment."

Farmers on the San Joaquin Valley's West Side, who often receive their irrigation water from the federally managed Central Valley Project, have seen deliveries more than cut in half some years, regardless of the previous winter's rainfall.

The proposed system would provide greater reliability to growers, increasing their annual supplies by 15 percent to 20 percent. Growers often make their planting decisions based on the availability of water: More water typically means more planted acres.

"One question to be answered is who will pay for the program?" asked Dave Kranz, water information director for the California Farm Bureau Federation. "They are discussing non-CVP (Central Valley Project) user fees. Who decides how much and how long they last? Once instituted, it's unlikely they will ever go away or go down."

"That's where the rubber meets the road. Water is a big production cost for farmers. Farmers and rural people will feel the pain. We want to make sure they share the benefits."

One element of the proposal is that water users, including irrigation districts in Modesto, Merced and other cities, be taxed to provide permanent funding for CalFed's ecosystem programs.

"We're concerned about diversion fees," Modesto Irrigation District general manager Allen Short said. "We don't pay them now, and we need to find out where that money goes and where the benefit goes. Also, how will it be calculated?"

Those issues, and numerous others, will be

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negotiated in the following months, Condit said.

"Gray Davis gets all the credit because he has been totally engaged in developing a comprehensive approach to California's water problems," Condit said. "We met for the last six months, every other day for two to three hours a day. The governor was always there to weigh in and make sure we stayed focused."